

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-14 ISO-00 HA-05 PA-02 ICA-20

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R 110735Z APR 78

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7537

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 JOHANNESBURG 0921

CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A

INT, SOPN, SF

SUBJECT: QOBOZA INAUGURAL EDITORIAL

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY PERCY QOBOZA APPEARED IN THE POST
NEWSPAPER FRIDAY, APRIL 7, 1978: QUOTE:

PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO KNOW

IF THIS WAS AN ORDINARY "PERCY'S PITCH", IT COULD HAVE BEEN A
JOYOUS OCCASION IN WHICH MY CHARACTERISTIC CYNICISM WOULD
ORDINARILY FIND AN EASY OUTLET.

I COULD EASILY CHUCKLE, LIKE THAT EASY-GOING COLUMNIST CASSANDRA,
WHO FINDING HIMSELF IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHOLLY UNLIKE MINE, COULD
HAVE TAKEN REFUGE BEHIND A PROCLAMATION THAT READS: " AS I WAS
SAYING BEFORE I WAS SO RUDELY INTERRUPTED NEARLY SIX MONTHS AGO...."

OR I COULD, IN TYPICAL FASHION, HAVE MADE A LIGHT OBSERVATION THAT
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WHEN I WAS TOSSED INTO JAIL NEARLY SIX MONTHS AGO, I WAS
REGISTERED THERE AS A BANTU, BUT I EMERGED FROM THAT PRISON AS
A PLURAL.

THESE THINGS I COULD DO BUT IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT I HAVE
UNDERGONE A TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE. ONE THAT HAS LEFT ME WONDERING...

WHEN THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE, MR. J.T. KRUGER, SIGNED THAT ORDER
BANNING THE WORLD, WEEKEND WORLD, I WONDERED.... AND HAVING
MARCHED TO MODDER BEE PRISON UNDER SECTION 10 OF THE INTERNAL
SECURITY ACT.... I WONDERED.

I WONDERED WHAT MY COUNTRY AND WHAT MY COUNTRYMEN HAD COME TO. I
WONDERED BECAUSE THE BAN ON THOSE NEWSPAPERS HAD TO BE SEEN IN
ITS PROPER CONTEXT. NAMELY THAT THIS WAS NOT AN ISOLATED SINGLE
INCIDENT AFFECTING ONE PART OF THE MEDIA BUT A GENERAL WARNING
TO ALL NEWSPAPERS AND NEWSPAPERMEN: THAT THE TIME FOR TALKING IS
OVER. YOU EITHER TOE THE LINE OR ELSE....

TO THE ETERNAL CREDIT OF THE PRESS IN GENERAL AND SOME AFRIKAANS
NEWSPAPERS IN PARTICULAR, THIS ACTION WAS SEEN FOR WHAT IT REALLY
WAS. THERE WAS ALL ROUND CONDEMNATION OF THIS ACTION, WHICH, IT
WAS SUGGESTED - AND THIS WAS LATER TO BE PROVED RIGHT - WOULD HAVE
A DAMAGING EFFECT ON THE COUNTRY'S IMAGE WORLDWIDE.

IT IS NOW HISTORY WHAT TRANSPIRED. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND THEN,
I AM TODAY ASSUMING THE EDITORSHIP OF POST AND SUNDAY POST. I
ASSUME THIS POSITION TOTALLY BLIND TO THE " CRIMES" THAT LED TO
THE GOVERNMENT TAKING THE ACTIONS THEY DID. AND HEREIN LIES MY
AGAONY. FOR ALL OUR PLEASE TO BE TOLD JUST WHAT LAW WE ARE
SUPPOSED TO HAVE BROKEN HAVE BEEN MET WITH A STONY " YOU KNOW
WHAT YOU HAVE DONE". HARDLY THE TYPE OF STATEMENT THAT CAN
STAND THE CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF ANY COURT OF LAW.
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THE ONLY SPECIFIC THING THAT HAS BEEN WAVED AT ME HAS BEEN TWO
SENTENCES TAKEN OUT OF COMPLETE CONTEXT FROM AN EDITORIAL WRITTEN
WEEKS BEFORE EITHER THE PRIME MINISTER OR THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE
EXPRESSED THEIR DISPLEASURE AT MY NEWSPAPERS.

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UNCLAS SECTION 2 OF 2 JOHANNESBURG 0921

CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, SOPN, SF
SUBJECT: QOBOZA INAUGURAL EDITORIAL

I AM THEREFORE TODAY TAKING OVER THE EDITORSHIP OF THIS PAPER WITHOUT ANY GUIDELINES EXCEPT THE HIGHEST PRINCIPLES OF JOURNALISM I AM TOTALLY COMMITTED TO. THE ONLY GUIDELINES I HAVE ARE THOSE WHICH I PRESENTLY SUBSCRIBE TO AND WHICH I EXPECT EVERY MEMBER OF MY STAFF TO ADHERE TO AT ALL TIMES. AND THESE ARE TRUTH, INTEGRITY AND THE UPHOLDING OF THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE TO KNOW. TO THESE THERE CAN BE NO COMPROMISE AT ALL. WE ARE SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS AND THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE MAJORITY OF OUR PEOPLE. WHAT IS MORE WE ARE COMPLETELY AND KEENLY AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ROLE A NEWSPAPER MUST PLAY IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH OUR COUNTRY FINDS ITSELF. WE HAVE A DUTY AND A BINDING RESPONSIBILITY TO PUT THE INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRY FIRST AND TO CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY TO ITS TRANSFORMATION INTO A REALLY JUST SOCIETY.

I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT I WILL BE SERVING THE INTERESTS OF MY
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COUNTRY AND ALL HER PEOPLES BY SUPPRESSING THE TRUTH SIMPLY BECAUSE SUCH A TRUTH IS UNPALATABLE TO CERTAIN SECTIONS OF THE POPULATION. WE WILL ACCORDINGLY, GIVE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS MERITED AND WE WILL DISH OUT CONDEMNATION WHERE AN INJUSTICE IS BEING DONE TO ANYBODY, IRRESPECTIVE OF WHO HE OR SHE MAY BE.

I HAVE BEEN DISTRESSED IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS AT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE QUESTIONED THE CREDIBILITY OF THE PRESS. FOR THE GOVERNMENT, THE OCTOBER CRACKDOWN HAD THE DESIRED EFFECT ON NEWSPAPERS GENERALLY. BUT SURELY EVEN BEFORE OCTOBER, IT WAS EVIDENT THAT THERE WAS AN ELEMENT OF SELF-CENSORSHIP ON THE PART OF LARGE SECTIONS OF THE PRESS. EXISTING LAWS, NOT TO MENTION THE CONTINUOUS DETENTIONS AND RAIDS CARRIED OUT AT HOMES OF JOURNALISTS

CREATED AN ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH IT WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR A FREE PRESS TO CARRY OUT ITS DUTIES SATISFACTORILY.

BECAUSE NEWSPAPERS HAVE FOR YEARS HAD TO BEAR IN MIND LAWS LIKE THE PRISONS ACT, THE DEFENCE ACT, LAWS RELATING TO INCITEMENT, RACIAL HOSTILITY AND OTHERS WHEN THEY PRODUCE NEWSPAPERS. THERE IS VERY LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE AUTHORITIES WILL BE RADING NEWSPAPERS WITH GREATER VIGILANCE IN THE FUTURE.

HOWEVER, WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THESE LAWS AND REGULATIONS AND IN SPITE OF MANY OTHER DIFFICULTIES WE WILL ENCOUNTER, WE INTEND, ON THIS PAPER, TO CARRY OUT OUR TASK WITH VIGOUR AND DETERMINATION. TELLING IT AS IT IS AT ALL TIMES. FOR TO US THE PRESS REMAINS OUR LAST BASTION AGAINST THE EROSION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES IN OUR COUNTRY.

AND WHAT IS MORE, WE WILL NOT APOLOGISE TO ANYBODY FOR CARRYING OUT OUR TASKS RESPONSIBLY, TRUTHFULLY AND WITH INTEGRITY. POST HAS PLAYED A VITAL ROLE IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS AT A TIME WHEN OUR PEOPLE COULD HAVE BEEN LEFT WITHOUT A NEWSPAPER THEY COULD UNCLASSIFIED

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RELATE TO. WE HOPE TO CONTINUE PLAYING THAT PART MEANINGFULLY IN THE FUTURE.

FOR HERE IS A PAPER THAT HISTORICALLY REPRESENTED IN MANY WAYS BLACK JOURNALISM AT ITS BEST.

TODAY POST HAS A HOST OF POTENTIAL GREAT JOURNALISTS AND SOME OF ITS WELL KNOWN BLACK WRITERS ARE ALSO DESTINED TO MAKE THEIR MARK IN JOURNALISM IN THIS COUNTRY.

THEY WILL BE THE RECORDERS OF TODAY'S HISTORY AND THE CUSTODIANS OF OUR PEOPLE'S DESTINY. THIS MUCH WE OWE OUR PEOPLE AND SOUTH AFRICA AND WE INTEND TO DO IT IN THE BEST TRADITION. UNQUOTE. JOHNSON

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